



Dr. Elaine Leigh
DNP, FNP-BC

Dr. Elaine Leigh earned a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) from Ferris State University, and a Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) & Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) at Grand Valley State University's (GVSU) Kirkhof College of Nursing. Her DNP practice innovation was the development and implementation of a dedicated, community-based, hepatitis C treatment clinic at Mercy Health in Muskegon which is one of, if not the only, clinic in Michigan dedicated to treating Hepatitis C. She successfully juggled coursework and an internship while developing a cutting-edge treatment program in order to get the clinic up and running in 2012.

Close to 80 percent of the estimated 3 million Americans infected with Hepatitis C have no idea they have it. Hepatitis C can go undetected for decades, finally surfacing with symptoms such as joint pain or fatigue that mimic the natural signs of aging. If left untreated, the virus causes cirrhosis (liver disease), cancer and death. In the Muskegon area, prior to the opening of the Mercy Health Hepatitis C Clinic, the only treatments available for the disease required three visits to a doctor's office every week for four years and success rates were depressingly low — between 9 and 30 percent — and the side effects debilitating. Using the new treatment protocols Leigh helped introduce locally, the clinic's initial success rates were better than 70 percent, and last year their goal was to utilize newly introduced medicines with the hopes of improving success rates to 90 percent and shortening treatment times to as little as three to six months.

A gastrointestinal nurse for over 20 years with the last 12 years as a nurse practitioner, Dr. Leigh remains at Mercy Health's Hepatitis C Clinic as a GVSU Embedded Faculty which allows her to continue her clinical work in hepatitis C while teaching and mentoring nursing students.